

REMARKS

The applicants note with appreciation the acknowledgement of the claim for priority under section 119 and the notice that all of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

The applicants acknowledge and appreciate receiving a copy of form PTO-1449, on which the examiner has initialed all listed items.

Claims 1, 3 – 5, 7 – 11, 13 – 16 and 18 – 19 are pending. Claims 2, 6, 12 and 16 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. New claims 18 – 19 have been added. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

On pages 4 – 5 of the office action, dependent claims 6, 7, 12, 16 and 17 were objected to, but indicated as being allowable if rewritten in independent form provided that indefiniteness is overcome. Claim 1 has been re-written to include allowable claims 6 and 2; claim 8 has been re-written to include allowable claims 12 and 1; claim 13 has been amended to include allowable claim 16. Further, claims 7 and 17 have been rewritten in independent form. It is respectfully submitted that claims 1, 7, 8, 13 and 17 as rewritten are allowable. Claims 2, 6, 12 and 16 were canceled, and claims dependent from claim 2 have been amended to depend from allowable claim 1. In addition, new claims 18 – 19, depending from allowable claim 17 have been added. In view of the above, the applicant submits that the claims are patentable.

The applicants have rewritten the claims since the office action indicated that claims 6, 7, 12, 16 and 17 would be allowable if so re-written. However, the applicants do not concede that other features in the claims are found in the prior art.

The applicants wish to clarify for the record, if necessary, that the claims have been amended to expedite prosecution. Moreover, the applicants reserve the right to pursue the original subject matter in a continuation application.

Any narrowing amendment to the claims in the present Amendment is not to be construed as a surrender of any subject matter between the original claims and the present claims; rather this is merely an attempt at providing one or more definitions of what the applicants believe to be suitable patent protection. In addition, the present claims provide the intended scope of protection that the applicants are seeking for this application. Therefore, no estoppel should be presumed, and the applicants' claims are intended to include a scope of protection under the Doctrine of Equivalents.

For all the reasons advanced above, the applicants respectfully submit that the claims as amended are allowable.

Claims 4, 6, 10, 12 and 16 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. The specific instances of indefiniteness identified in the office action have been corrected. In view of the amended claims, it is respectfully requested that the rejection be reconsidered and withdrawn.

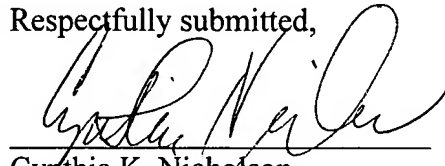
Claims 1 – 5, 8 – 11 and 13 – 15 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being unpatentable over US 2004/0085197, Watanabe et al. (“Watanbe”). In view of the independent claims being re-written into allowable form, it is respectfully submitted that the rejection is moot, insofar as it may be applied to the claims as amended. Withdrawal thereof is respectfully requested.

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In view of the forgoing, the applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Please charge any unforeseen fees that may be due to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cynthia K. Nicholson', written over a horizontal line.

Cynthia K. Nicholson

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